Canadian Heritage Patrimoine canadien

Canada

News Release ~ Communiqué

Celebrations for 30th anniversary of the Canadian flag

OTTAWA, February 10, 1995 "I encourage you to take part in the many special events being organized for our flag's anniversary. For thirty years now, our country has had a flag in its own image something we can all celebrate," Canadian Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy said today in connection with the activities which will mark the 30th anniversary of the Canadian flag on February 15.

In his message, the Minister encouraged Canadians to take part in the celebrations planned in every provincial capital and other locations. The following list is a selection of events that will take place across Canada.

National capital- A public ceremony, to be attended by the Right Honourable Governor General Roméo Leblanc and Right Honourable Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, will be held on the Parliament Hill.

Newfoundland- At Signal Hill National Historic Site, more than 150 guests including the Lieutenant Governor of the province will attend a flag-raising ceremony.

Prince Edward Island- A similar ceremony will take place in front of Province House in Charlottetown, the birthplace of Confederation. The Lieutenant Governor, who will raise the flag, and the city's Mayor will be among those present.

Nova Scotia- In Halifax, Mayor Walter Fitzgerald will raise the flag at 1 p.m. during an official ceremony to be attended among others by dignitaries and members of community groups.

New Brunswick- In Saint John, the Mayor and members of the Common Council of Canada's First Incorporated City will preside at a flag-raising ceremony to be held in front of City Hall.

Quebec- A special ceremony will take place in front of the Quebec City armoury on February 12 (last day of Quebec City's carnival). Martin Cauchon, Member of Parliament (Outremont) and the Lieutenant Governor of the province will be among the distinguished guests.

Ontario- At Maple Leaf Garden in Toronto, activities are planned during the hockey game between the Maple Leafs and the Edmonton Oilers. Miniature flags will be distributed to fans.

Manitoba- A ceremony will be held at Forks National Historic Site as part of the voyageur festival. Dignitaries and students will be present.

Saskatchewan- In Regina, members of the Legion of Honour, the army, veterans and other communities will meet at the Cornwall shopping centre for a flag-raising ceremony.

Alberta- Activities surrounding the flag-raising ceremony will be organized in a number of locations, including various national parks and historical sites. The ceremonies, which will begin everywhere at 10 a.m., will be held before students, community groups and local leaders.

British Columbia- Activities are planned in various locations, especially in national parks and historical sites, as well as at UBC and in primary and secondary schools.

Yukon- A ceremony, to be attended by the Royal Canadian Legion, the Commissioner of the Yukon and the Mayor of Whitehorse, will take place at the Elijah Smith Federal Building in Whitehorse.

Northwest Territories- At the Centre Square Mall in Yellowknife, miniature flags, pins and information on the 30th anniversary of the flag will be distributed to participants.

"We have every reason to rejoice and celebrate this important event in Canadian history since our flag has become a powerful symbol of who and what we are," added the Minister. "So, let us celebrate and fly it proudly!"

For further information, please contact one of the following:

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Our Flag and its History

The Canadian flag was raised for the first time before Parliament in Ottawa on February 15, 1965. This major event in Canadian history marked the culmination of forty years of thoughtful and sometimes very animated debate.

Ironically, the idea of a distinctive flag representative of our country was first raised the year after a variant of the Red Ensign was adopted as the symbol of Canada. This red flag, with a Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner and Royal Arms of Canada, was not really representative of Canada. (It had been flown from the masts of all British merchant ships since 1707.) A Privy Council committee undertook to solicit ideas for a national flag in 1925.

It was not until 1964, however, that real progress was made. That was when Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson expressed the desire to give Canada a distinctive national flag in time for the celebrations marking the centenary of the Canadian Confederation. He asked a parliamentary committee to choose a new flag.

After several months of study and inquiry, and after having received almost two thousand proposals, the committee recommended the flag that we know today. It was adopted by Parliament in mid-December 1964, and was proclaimed two months later, on February 15, 1965.

Why the Maple Leaf?

In physical terms, the Canadian flag is a red flag with a white square in the centre on which rests a maple leaf. Red and white are the colours of France and England respectively. These two countries, which have played such a predominant role in Canada's history, flew these colours long ago during the Crusades. It was therefore natural that these two colours should appear on our national flag.

The maple leaf has been associated with this land for centuries, well before the arrival of the Europeans. Since the first colonies were founded in Canada, the maple leaf has appeared on coins and stamps. Then in 1868, it was incorporated into the coats of arms of Quebec and Ontario and, in 1921, it was included in Canada's royal coat of arms. Nor should we forget that Canadian soldiers in the First and Second World Wars displayed the maple leaf on their uniforms.